

YOUR WEEK IN CHINA'S CAPITAL

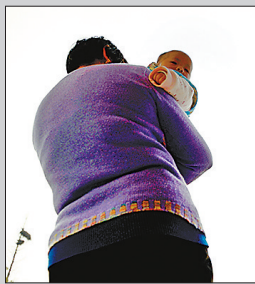
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Trafficking Shows Need for Easy Adoption

A black market demand for babies feeds off China's arcane adoption process. **Page 4**



AliPay Update Shows Alibaba's Fear of WeChat

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Southern School Finds New Leader

The independent SUSTC is back with a new leader from Peking U. **Page 6**



Train Goes on Hiatus

In spite of a stellar first day, awkward hours and ticketing policies have won the new bullet train connecting Beijing and Yanjiao few fans.

The train is being temporarily halted so the cars can be used elsewhere during the Spring Festival travel rush. **Page 2**



Man Caught Coordinating Blackmail, Conjugals from Prison Smartphone

BY YANG XIN

After a series of prison breaks late last year, Heilongjiang's correctional facilities are once again in the news for a strange case of digitally aided conjugal visits and blackmail.

A Nehe Prison inmate named Wang Dong reportedly defrauded two women and coerced another into engaging him in a sexual relationship at the prison using Tencent's popular WeChat. The jail's digital Don Juan was also involved in online romances with more than seven women who lived near the prison.

Among them was Li Li (pseudonym), the wife of a local police officer.

Wang used nude photos of Li to blackmail her into visiting him at the prison on several occasions.

On each visit, she brought gifts valued at more than 10,000 yuan. Li's husband reported the extortion to local authorities in November.

An official probe found that Wang had acquired more than 110,000 yuan worth of goods from two of the women on his WeChat contact list.

Wang was jailed in 2005 for robbery, for fraud in 2009 and for kidnapping in 2012, the *Oriental Morning Post* reported. He was 58 days shy of his 18th birthday when he was first imprisoned in 2005, the newspaper reported.

Local authorities confirmed that Wang bought his smartphone from a correctional officer. In the months following his incarceration, Wang developed a large network involving prisoners, jailers, relatives of jailers, mistresses and vendors working near the prison.

An inmate in an adjacent cell said Wang could often be heard consulting with correctional officers for romantic advice and what to say to his online girlfriends.

Prison administrators submitted the case to a local procuratorial office for public prosecution. The warden and five guards, who allegedly were bribed to conceal Wang's activities, were demoted or issued warnings. ■

CHINESE STOCK INDEXES

SSE (Shanghai)

Close	Change	YTD
3,262.31	▼ 43.43 (1.31%)	+0.86%

SZSE (Shenzhen)

Close	Change	YTD
11,249.04	▼ 105.16 (0.93%)	+2.13%

HSI (Hong Kong)

Close	Change	YTD
24,595.85	▼ 265.96 (1.07%)	+4.20%

Accurate to market close on January 29, 2015





CFP Photos

Jing-Yan Bullet Train Gets a Cold Reception

BY ZHENG CHONG

The widely anticipated Jing-Yan bullet train will be suspended from later this month thanks to its alarmingly cold reception.

Created to connect Beijing with Yanjiao, a boomtown on its eastern border with Hebei province, planners expected the train to become a primary mode of transportation the tens of thousands of people who live in Hebei and work in Beijing.

However, after carrying a full load of passengers on January 12, the line's use crashed to unsustainable levels.

Located about 30 miles east of Tian'anmen Square, Yanjiao is home to 500,000 residents, some 60,000 of whom work in Beijing. The trans-provincial traffic puts immense pressure on all

subway, bus and rail lines connecting the two cities.

Three bullet trains connecting Beijing and Yanjiao, and each is capable of carrying 400 passengers per day. They are rarely operating at more than half capacity.

In order to better serve the Spring Festival travel boom, the Ministry of Railways said it would temporarily suspend the three trains for use on other lines.

Passengers also complained about the inconvenience of taking the trains and their "irrational" schedule.

"It takes me a long time to book a ticket and get it. Also, the ticket checking process often makes me uncomfortable," said a passenger surnamed Huang. "I think the buses are much more convenient."

"There is only one Jing-Yan bullet train



available before 8 am each day. If you miss that train, you have no choice and cannot recoup the ticket cost," a netizen writing under the handle Hailang Botao said.

"The night train departs at 5:50 pm. Most people don't leave work before 5:30 pm, which makes it impossible to get the train station in time," another netizen named 'Treasure' wrote.

Ordinary trains such as K7782, K7783 and K7784 offer more accommodating schedules. Though different from bullet trains, their trip time is nearly same and can even be four minutes faster than D9022, whose time is 31 minutes.

The Beijing Rail Company said it would lower its ticket prices for coach passage on the trains once they formally enter regular operation. ■

Change Coming to College Entrance Exam

BY DIAO DIAO

After years of complaints and disputes about college enrollment, Beijing has finally agreed to allow students to select which college they will apply to after taking the National College Entrance Exam.

In September, the State Council published a notice of its plan to reform college enrollment. The notice requires that all students be allowed to select which school they will attend according to their scores.

"In the past, Beijing students were required to name their schools before ever taking the exam," Zang Tiejun, vice president of the Beijing Education and Examination Authority said. "This year, Beijing will make some changes."



Zang said details of the plan will be released before Spring Festival.

According to the usual schedule, students must submit their college selection forms in May. Their scores, however, do not arrive until June 23.

Zang said students would be able to name their preferred schools after receiving their scores rather than having to guess how well they might achieve.

The reform may give students from remote areas a better chance to enroll in school. "In order to have an overall improvement in education, universities such as Capital Normal University and Capital University of Economics and Busi-

ness will set aside a bigger quota for recruiting students from the countryside," the Beijing Municipal Commission of Education said.

In addition to the enrollment adjustment, the reform also includes changes to the bonus points system.

According to the notice released by the Ministry of Education at the end of last year, honors students and those distinguished in morality, Olympic math, scientific competition and sports will not be awarded bonus points on their exams.

The only remaining bonus points will be the 5 points automatically awarded to students who come from ethnic minorities.

Beijing students who will attend this year's exams said they feel optimistic about the change.

"Teachers always emphasize the importance of school selection before the exam, and that's been a major distraction. Now I can focus on the exam and worry about schools later," said by student in Haidian district who refused to be named.

Some parents said that it's unfair to Beijing students compared with other cities that have already carried out such policy long ago. ■

Courts to Stop Tracking Rate of Case Settlement

BY LI RUIQI

In one of its most proactive moves of the last decade, the Political and Law Conference ruled that courts would no longer be allowed to consider the rate of case settlement when assessing annual performance earlier this month.

Deputy Judge Wu Zaicun of the Beijing Supreme Court also announced plans to remove the item from judges' personal assessment in Beijing after the conference.

"This is a sound action to improve the quality of trial courts," said Liu Zhiyun, a deputy to the National People's Congress.

The rate of case settlement has long been used as a crucial index of court performance. It has also been condemned as the most direct cause of miscarriage of justice and of courts' refusal to hear new cases near the year end.

A chief judge at a Beijing primary court who spoke on conditions of anonymity said his court settled 98 percent of its cases in 2007 and stopped hearing new cases every November.

"Opening new cases creates a bigger denominator," said Zhang Wei, a judge who recently resigned from a Beijing primary court. Overtime is common at the end of the year as courts scramble to close as many cases as possible.

When Spring Festival approaches, many courts directly advise prosecutors to withdraw their lawsuits in order to artificially inflate their rate of case settlement, the *Beijing Times* reported.

While some cases are continued after Spring Festival, many fall into an administrative black hole and are suspended indefinitely due to a loss of evidence.

"Cases taken in November can rarely be solved by the end of the year," Zhang said. He said the index is in contradiction to the natural time it takes to close a case. Most require at least three months from the date of the preliminary hearing. Cases that move to the appeals process can drag on for years.

"Often, the court asks the litigants to postpone prosecution to the next year. To some degree, it's a violation of the litigant's right to action," he said.

While the change will help to lessen the courts' burden, it may also contribute to a larger backlog of cases. Chi Qiang, chief judge of the Beijing Supreme Court, said monthly or seasonal evaluations might be a better way to gauge working efficiency. ■



Photo by cdzfw.gov.cn



CFP Photos

Macaque Circus Trainers Cleared of Wildlife Transport Charges

BY YANG XIN

Four macaque circus trainers charged with illegally transporting rare wildlife were acquitted on January 20 when an appellate court overturned guilty verdict in Xinye County, Henan province.

The People's Court of Xinye County in Henan Province announced Bao Fengshan and three other performers were not guilty of what should have been a minor offense.

The four were detained by local police in July when performing with six macaques on the streets of Mudanjiang in Heilongjiang province on account of lacking a "wildlife transportation license," local police said.

According to regulations, macaque performers must have three licenses for domestication and breeding, performing and wildlife transportation. Most performers are unable to obtain the wildlife

transport licenses due to complicated administration procedures.

The men were detained for two months until their trial in September.

"Our family has been putting on macaque performances for generations even though we never had a wildlife transportation license," said Zhang Zhizhong, a macaque circus performer in Xinye.

Lack of the license caused Zhang to be frequently driven away by authorities. The incident in Mudanjiang marks his first conviction.

Although Zhang Zhizhong and the others won their case, the most troublesome issue has not been solved, said Zhang Junran, head of the Macaque Art Association of Xinye County.

"We need to think of a way for monkey circus art to continue. Street performance

no longer suits urban culture. We have to develop an official performance troupe and grant each performing monkey an authorized 'hukou' to facilitate management. Our goal is to bring our street art to the stage," he said.

"We also hope relevant departments can simplify procedures for us to obtain the proper licenses, taking into account the value of macaque circus art as an intangible cultural heritage," Zhang said.

As a traditional art of Xinye, monkey circus performances were listed as an intangible cultural heritage by Henan province in 2009. The art's origins date back to the Eastern Han Dynasty more than 2,000 years ago.

Monkey performers usually travel around the country with their animals. More than 200 people in Xinye are macaque circus trainers and performers. ■

Regulations Limit Foreign Content on Streaming Video Sites

BY DIAO DIAO

Chinese streaming video site operators were warned to remove many of their foreign series last March. Now a new regulation issued by the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television on January 23 threatens to cut even more.

The new rules require that foreign-origin programs account for less than 30 percent of the content on any domestic media platform. Both broadcast stations and streaming website operators will be subject to the regulation.

Additionally, it also requires that all imported series must be registered through SARFT with a clear description of their content. The deadline for registration is February 10, with a possible extended deadline of March 31.

Series from 2014 that are still airing will be subject to the same limitation.

Popular shows such as *Shameless*, *Agent Carter* and *Empire* were removed from many video websites last year. The new regulations threaten more popular series such as *The Walking Dead*, *Masters of Sex*, *Supernatural* and *American Horror Story*.



Insiders said the new regulations would mostly affect the importation of new series. Ongoing series can't be submitted for approval until when the entire series finishes airing.

For many US dramas that spend four months to air one season, the Chinese broadcast will be delayed by at least six months.

Websites are already culling their content. Instead of focusing on new series, Tencent and Youku have been reviving long-ended series such as *24*, *Hero* and *Desperate Housewives*.

Fans of foreign TV have complained bitterly about the new regulations, saying that most of the domestic shows feature repetitive and uninteresting themes.

But website operators seem unusually calm about the change. Wei Ming, CEO of Youku, said that site hopes to encourage more user-generated content. The quality of videos uploaded by common users has improved dramatically over the years, and shows by amateur studios are among its most popular.

Amateur shows are of lower risk to video websites and encourage creativity, he said.

Lin Zaichuan, a TV analyst, said the amount of excellent foreign shows is fairly limited and that the 30 percent restriction is unlikely to seriously affect the flow of quality content.

Wei said Youku will continue to seek great programming from abroad. ■



Chongqing Bans Bacon to Fight City's Pollution

Chongqing's Bureau of Environment Protection is banning bacon for its role in contributing to the central city's air pollution.

From January 20, anyone caught making smoked bacon in the city will be fined as much as 5,000 yuan, according to the bureau's website.

A recent report on the city's increasing smog blamed smoked meat as a major source of air pollution.

The move follows a similar decision by Beijing last year to ban outdoor barbecues and kabob stands.

(Xinhua)

Scary Watermelon Man Pulled From Beijing Subway

A man who became a minor local celebrity for wearing a mask carved out of a watermelon was pulled off the Beijing subway by Beijing police last week.

Passengers who met "Watermelon Brother" reported that he was rarely spotted without bottles of beer and baijiu and generally acted pretty creepy.

A passenger who was particularly upset shared a photo of the passenger with the Beijing's subway police's social media account. The man was reportedly removed for questioning soon after.

(Tencent)

Fake Bank in Nanjing Nabs 200M Yuan in Deposits

More than 200 people were duped into depositing their money in a fake bank in Nanjing, the BBC reported.

The bank was built to look exactly like a real bank with teller windows and uniformed staff. It promised an interest rate of 2 percent per week to anyone willing to open an account.

It collected more than 200 million yuan during its last year of operation. Customers only realized something was wrong when their promised interest never arrived.

One man who had deposited more than 12 million yuan called police after the bank refused to allow him to withdraw his money.

Five people were arrested for the scam, including one woman who fled to Macau with a sizable amount of the deposits.

(BBC)

Adviser Calls for Gov to Attack Internet Slang

Vulgar Internet slang could be on the way out if the a proposal to the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference is embraced.

Zhang Huaqiong, a member of the 12th Shanghai committee at the conference, takes special issue with popular words such as "diaosi," a slang word for loser that can literally be read to mean penile hair.

She's not out to destroy all slang, however, "zhongguo da ma" seems to be perfectly acceptable, she said.

The move follows attempts by Chinese state media to "stay hip" by adopting the vernacular of China's younger generation in its broadcasts.

(Shanghai Daily)

Latest Trafficking Scandal a Wake-Up Call for Adoption Reform

BY YANG XIN

Police in Shandong province busted a child-trafficking ring earlier this month, rescuing 37 abducted children who had been living in a cellar under squalid conditions and capturing their 103 traffickers.

But unlike most child-trafficking cases, which involve child abduction, the children discovered in Shandong had been sold by their parents or other family members.

Traffickers first reached out to pregnant women through black channels and made deals with potential buyers to sell newborn girls for 60,000 yuan and boys 80,000 yuan.

China has seen numerous child-trafficking cases in the past few years. In 2013, police rescued 92 children and

arrested 301 suspects. Last March, Chinese police uncovered four child-trafficking rings and arrested more than 1,000 people for using websites and instant messaging groups to trade in infants.

While the crackdowns have kept child abduction on the decline, traffickers have been finding new ways to continue the black-market trade: especially by inviting suppliers to complete the chain.

In his recent study on children abduction, Li Chunlei, a scholar at Chinese People's Public Security University, found that 67 of the 133 cases reported by media since 2000 involved the child's natural parents or relatives as the original seller.

Laws to Target Buyers

Men and women found guilty of traffick-

ing face heavy penalties ranging from five years' jail to death. But that does not include the buyers who, under current law, are immune from criminal prosecution unless they are found to have abused the children or hindered rescue efforts.

While Article 241 of China's Criminal Law stipulates that "adopters who acquire children through illegal channels may face up to three years prison," it also states "adopters may be exempt from criminal liability as long as they have not abused the abducted children or interfered with police rescue efforts" in Article 6.

Article 241 rarely ends up being applied in judicial practices while Article 6 acts as a powerful legal shield for buyers of trafficked children.

But buyers have another reason to feel lucky. When a trafficked child's natural parents are convicted and sentenced to prison, the court often rules that the child should stay with his or her adoptive parents – even if they acquired the baby through illegal channels.

Too Many Barriers

"Poverty is the root of trafficking," said Pia MacRae, China's director of Save the Children. "Trafficking routes go from poor, remote areas to more developed, affluent regions."

When asked whether the sale of children by families too poor to raise a baby should really constitute a crime, Liu Huiheng, deputy chief of a criminal investigation brigade under the Changting Public Security Bureau, said yes.

Last year, Changting, Fujian province was singled out for its child trade. Local police found that five children raised by local families were trafficked with three being sold by their natural parents.

"I thought it was fine as long as the adoptive parents treated my child well," said one of the parents surnamed Feng.

Feng's confession sounded more like an appeal for adoption reform.

Qin Xiyan, head of Hunan Qin Xiyan Law Firm, said 10 percent of Chinese couples are unable to conceive and 10 percent of the children born suffer from physical disabilities. With the addition of families who lose their only child, the demand for adoption is growing.

But China's only legal path to adoption is the Child Welfare Association: private adoption exists on the fringes of the law.

"The legal process of adoption from the Child Welfare Association is hampered by excessive requirements. That's what makes private adoption so popular,



Most of the abducted children rescued by the Shandong police were found in poor health.



Photos by Jingmen Online

which in turn creates the need for trafficked kids," said Yang Xiaolin, a lawyer at the Beijing YueCheng law firm.

An editorial on the *Guangming Daily* analyzed the allegedly high requirements in detail. China's Adoption Law requires applicants to be childless, qualified to "implement family education," free of diseases or disabilities that could affect their ability to raise a child and older than 30.

Few couples can meet all the requirements at once.

Another barrier is the formalities. Those eligible for adoption must submit a series of certifications and go through five checks by both local authorities and authorities in the child's birthplace.

The cost of the formalities can exceed 35,000 yuan.

Families yearning for healthy children can easily be led to search the black market when legal options are placed beyond their reach.

Learning from Abroad

Wang Linghong, a Chinese national living in France, had much to say about the European country's adoption system.

"France has a higher degree of child adoption than its European neighbors due to vastly simplified procedures. It's very helpful in suppressing the black market," Wang said.

"You only need to prove to the social welfare department that you can give the child a healthy environment, access to school education and safety. That's it," she said. "You can even apply to adopt multiple children at once. The examination procedure takes about six months."

France has many protective measures granting children's rights. Families living in poverty, once they have a child, can access to tax breaks, subsidies and a small allowance when the school year begins. Single mothers receive the most assistance.

"The law and social security support each other, which leaves the underground market nowhere to thrive," she said. ■



CFP Photo



AliPay's New Features Betray Intense Fear of WeChat

BY LYNNE WANG

As WeChat Payment becomes the platform of choice for settling online accounts, Alibaba is fighting back with its increasingly neglected AliPay Wallet.

On January 26, the company released an updated version of the product that added instant messaging features and friending. Called "My Friend," the function encourages users to add their friends' mobile numbers or AliPay accounts and to communicate with them.

Other social features include Intimate Pay, which allows users to send money to close friends and relatives, and the Ten Years Bill, which allows users to share their usage history.

But after a decade as an online payment tool, it's hard to say whether AliPay's new features meet a demand or betray Alibaba's own anxiety over losing the social media arms race.

Ali's Obsession

Social media helped many start-ups weather the fallout from the dotcom bubble of the early 2000s. For a firm that survived without the aid of social media, the concept holds a particular mystique.

Alibaba has been passionate about developing social networking products since 2008. Its series of attempts to date includes Taojianghu, Aiguangjie and Quanzi, all based on its own e-commerce platform, as well as the independent application Laiwang.

Readers who never heard of any of these should not feel surprised: all were colossal bombs.

But a string of failures has done little to diminish Alibaba's passion for social media – especially after witnessing the power of Tencent's WeChat.

After investing \$40 million in MoMo, the dating app whose notoriety came from its adoption by prostitutes and call girls, Alibaba burned another \$586 million to become the second largest share-

holder of Sina Weibo in 2013.

And now Weibo is dying.

"Alibaba is once again at a disadvantage in the game of mobile social media, and that disadvantage is threatening the dominance of its AliPay payment platform," *Huxiu Daily* said in an editorial.

Alibaba has been reeling since the beating it took during Spring Festival 2014. In a move that Chinese IT watchers called "Tencent's Attack on Pearl Harbor," WeChat dragged Chinese tradition into the digital age with electronic red envelopes.

"Using digital payment platforms to send gifts was nothing new. AliPay and Weibo already did it. But what made WeChat different was that it tapped into the culture of red envelopes to turn WeChat Payment into a household name almost overnight," said Tian Shujuan, a reporter for *Chengdu Commercial Daily*.

More than 8 million users connected their bank accounts to WeChat during the next week and began settling their digital transactions through WeChat Payment.

"Public opinion turned on Alibaba almost immediately. Everyone believed WeChat Payment would eclipse AliPay. Both the user experience and product were very well engineered, and the beating Alibaba suffered was a profound lesson," said Jack Ma, CEO of Alibaba.

To fight back against WeChat, Alibaba is looking to its widely used AliPay Wallet as a potential social nexus.

According to Alibaba's official data, the app has more than 190 million users. Finding a way to keep them there and monetize their social connections is the challenge.

Redundant Features

Released in 2003, AliPay was the first influential online payment platform in China. It stepped into the mobile payment arena with a smartphone application in 2009.

Thanks to a boom of e-commerce industry and the band effect of its sister firm Taobao, AliPay quickly became the largest payment app. By 2013, AliPay Wallet had surpassed PayPal to become the world's largest mobile payment platform.

But as a leading mobile payment tool, business insiders question the wisdom of jumping on WeChat's success. It's hard to imagine why users would want to use a relatively mature payment tool to chat or socialize.

"In the digital age, users' social behavior is exclusive. They are reluctant to change to a new social platform as long as the current one can satisfy their demands. Given WeChat has more than 500 million users, it's not hard to imagine what future awaits AliPay if its current users follow their friends to jump ship," said Zhu Jianhe, business analyst from *Beijing Times*.

Another obstacle is safety.

"AliPay is a financial application, and its users require safe financial transactions. But once you mix this up with chatting, AliPay Wallet could become a new tool for criminal offenders looking to steal money or personal data," Tian said.

"Our aim is not to be the next WeChat. The reason we added social networking services is to stay close to our users," said Chen Liang, a spokesman for AliPay.

Despite this explanation, it's not hard to recognize the blatant similarities between WeChat and AliPay Wallet regarding services, payment scenarios and social features.

But WeChat is at its heart a social platform and AliPay Wallet a financial tool: those identities will never change no matter which features the companies choose to tack on.

Alibaba's focus on learning from its top competitor puts it at a risk of diluting its identity and forgetting what it does best. ■

Photo by CFP



Photo by SUSTC



Zhu Qingshi, former president of SUSTC

Photo by CFP

Independent University Resumes with New President

BY YANG XIN



Chen Shiyi, new president of SUSTC

Photo by Nanfang Daily

After a four-month vacancy, the Shenzhen Municipal Government has settled on its new president for South University of Science and Technology of China: Chen Shiyi.

Chen's resume includes 20 years of overseas experience and an impressive position as the former deputy chief of Peking University. He is credited with rebuilding the school's engineering department from scratch on his return to Beijing in 2005.

More importantly, Chen is seen as a reformer. He and 10 professors at Peking University wrote a joint letter in 2011 to the dean suggesting admissions should be based on a combination of interviews and exam scores.

When the Shenzhen municipal government created SUSTC in 2007, its preparatory committee hoped it would offer a revolutionary model for higher education by breaking free of the bureaucracy imposed by the Ministry of Education.

Zhu Qingshi, formerly president of the SUSTC, was elected president of SUSTC through a global audition in 2009.

"SUSTC is different from most Chinese universities in its focus on sweeping out bureaucracy, which means that academic freedom can take precedence and researchers can pursue academic excellence rather than bureaucratic rank," Zhu

said in an early interview with *Nature*.

What to Reap?

SUSTC graduated its first batch of students on January 9. All were admitted through independent recruitment and conferred bachelor's degrees by the university without ever sitting the National College Entrance Exam.

Among the top 41 graduates, two were admitted to top schools and five faced deferred graduation with the rest on the way to apply for graduate study at foreign universities including Oxford University, London University and the Israel Institute of Technology.

"At SUSTC, I got experience discussing school construction, public affairs and scientific issues with classmates and teachers," said one of the graduates.

Student recognition might be the best gift for Zhu. Before resignation, he penned more than 200 letters of recommendation for the graduates seeking to apply abroad.

It was a necessary step, as SUSTC's students were barred from China's postgraduate entrance exams and the domestic civil service exam.

The dilemma ended this year due to a compromise with the Ministry of Education in 2012. Students at SUSTC are now required to take the National College Entrance Exam,

although the test only carries 60 percent weight in their admission. In exchange, all the students are granted diplomas that are recognized by the ministry.

But Zhu faced criticism for caving on his promise to buck the current educational system.

The previous limitation was also essential in pressuring SUSTC to pursue international exchange. Last year, its international cooperation department reached at least 15 agreements on international exchange programs with 12 prestigious schools.

What to Make Up For?

Zhu said his failure to complete a school code is his biggest regret.

"As a brand new university, SUSTC has always been missing something in its vision. Creating the school code was a major job that Zhu failed to complete in his tenure," said Xiong Bingqi, a renowned educator.

"A school code specifies rights and liabilities of the government, founders, managers and students involved. Most significantly, it offers a guiding principle in the university's daily administrative management. Once it is settled, it becomes the ultimate authority and prevents personnel changes from casting a shadow on the school's development," Xiong said.

His failure may betray the government's continued opposition to higher education reform. Although the school was nominally supported by the Shenzhen municipal government, government officers had no intention of allowing SUSTC to formulate its own school code," said Gonghai, a reporter at *Qi Lu Evening News*.

"Although the discussion over SUSTC's trial performance is not over, it has already helped us learn more about the bureaucratic barriers to higher education reform. This is the school's greatest value," Xiong said.

New President, New Future?

Chen Shiyi shares a similar background with Zhu Qingshi. Both are experienced in higher education reform and have profound academic backgrounds.

"He is a definitely a leading figure in his academic area," SUSTC faculty said. The selection committee also said Chen's academic competence and organizing and coordinating abilities would be valuable assets.

Supported by his social and political status, Chen may have a powerful say in the future of SUSTC.

But it will take wisdom as well as power to balance administrative restrictions with the quest for education independence. ■



Photo by CFP

Visa Waiver Programs Spark Tourism Fever

BY YANG XIN

2014 was a busy year for everyone who works in Beijing's diplomatic circles. It was a year of diplomatic events such as the APEC Summit, the G20 Summit and President Xi Jinping's visits to many European nations.

This year may be even busier, as the benefits of last year's work provide increasingly loose and friendly visa provisions that are boosting outbound tourism.

France

The French Polynesian government

recently released a statement that visa requirements for Chinese passport holders will be lifted for those staying less than 15 days.

Little known outside France, Réunion Island is a tropical island within Polynesia and has long been a hideaway paradise retreat for the French jet-set. The newly introduced visa-free facility is expected to attract luxury Chinese travelers to discover the isle's breath-taking scenery.

The territory's government has spoken out in favor of the change as it comes after years of clamor in Tahiti to open up to the potentially lucrative Chinese tourism market.

To be eligible for visa free travel to Tahiti, Chinese tourists will have to book their trips through travel agents approved by French consular authorities in China.

Japan

The Japanese government released a series of measures to relax multiple-entry visa conditions for Chinese travelers from January. Multiple-entry visas will be valid for three years and the duration of stay for each entry limited to 90 days.

Since January 19, more Chinese nationals will be given the chance to apply for multiple-entry visas to Japan. The original 200,000 yuan per year minimum threshold on applicants' annual incomes will be eased to 10,000 yuan.

Applicants who meet the previous income requirement may be eligible for a multiple-entry visa good for five years.

Australia

Late last year, the Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection announced it would set up an online application portal for Chinese nationals to submit digital visa application forms. This is the first time the Australian government opened its online tourism visa application portal to Chinese nationals. Insiders say that the new move has narrowed the processing period by two to three days.

Thailand

Thailand will waive visa fees for tourists from the Chinese mainland and Taiwan from August through October. The Thai tourism authority is also running a shopping campaign with large discounts.

United States

In his weeklong trip to China for the 2014 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Summit, American President Barack Obama announced that the US and China had agreed to a reciprocal 10-year visa policy for tourists and businessmen.

Under the visa agreement, business and short-term tourist visas will be valid for 10 years, while student and cultural exchange visas will last for five. Currently, such visas expire after just one year. The visa extension began on November 11, 2014. ■

Year of Cultural Exchange Sets Tone for 2015 UK-China Relations

BY YANG XIN

The UK is preparing to show off the best of its culture in a year of exchange agreed upon during the UK-China Summit in London last year.

The 2015 UK-China Year of Cultural Exchange will comprise two 'seasons' of culture – a UK season in China in the first half of 2015 and a China season in the UK in the second half of 2015.

The theme for the UK season in China will be Next Generation. It will include a carefully organized series of contemporary, adventurous, multi-disciplinary and innovative works, with digital media at its heart.

Its groundbreaking digital arts will push creative boundaries, and the launch of a new online arts portal will give viewers a chance to engage through a variety of integrated platforms.

The UK is renowned for its experience and reputation in fostering creativity across all industry sectors to drive growth and investment. In fact, the UK's

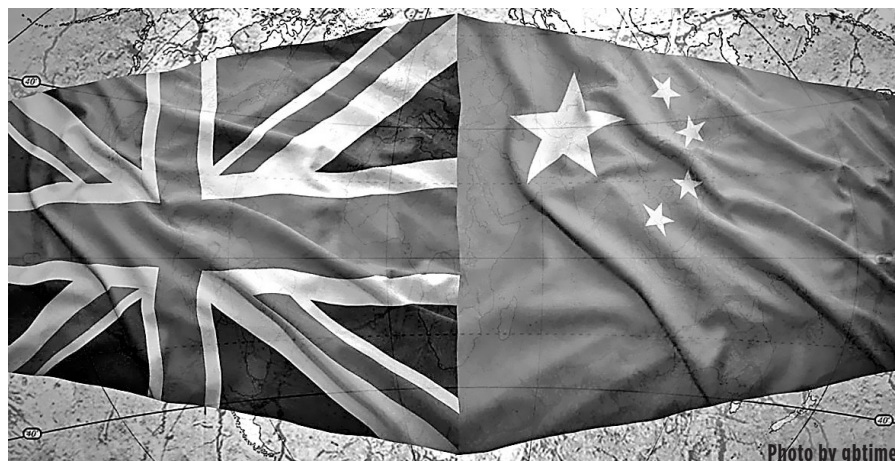


Photo by gbtimes

creative industries generate 8 million euro per hour and grew almost 10 percent in 2012.

"Our plans for 2015 are ambitious. The potential reach of being a partner for 2015 will be enormous: we will be working with major media partners to reach hun-

dreds of millions of people in China and globally. It promises to be a flagship year, offering significant opportunities for us both to build on new and existing partnerships together," said Carma Elliot, minister of the Cultural and Education Section of the British Embassy.

With up to 30 projects across China, the Year will bring some of the best of established UK talent to China as well as look to the next generation. Hundreds of millions of people in China, the UK and abroad will have access to the very best of British arts.

Last December, China's vice Minister of Culture Ding Wei met with Sir Martin Davidson, chief executive of the British Council to exchange ideas about Sino-British cultural communication and cooperation.

Ding spoke highly of Sino-British cultural ties. "For the past few years, our two countries worked together to succeed on many influential cultural events which yielded fruitful outcomes, especially in the cultivation of professionals on culture and art," he said.

Davidson said the Year will be a perfect opportunity for the two countries to cooperate in creative industry, theater operation and talent development. ■

Top Brands and Highlights of ISPO Beijing 2015

ISPO Beijing 2015 and Alpitex China are being held from January 28 to 31 at the China National Convention Center (CNCC).

This year, 434 exhibitors of 656 brands will be present at the show. Asia's only B2B multi-segment platform presents the latest innovative equipment for hiking, sports and skiing, as well as the most innovative new athletic fabrics and fibers.

The show presents the latest products and provides up-to-date information on the industry and current trends through its event and conference program.

The Industry Forum delves into the Chinese sporting goods industry using the latest market research on Chinese sporting goods by SGI Europe and ISPO. The ISPO TEXTRENDS Forum presents textile trends, innovations and colors for the fall/winter season 2016/2017.

Furthermore, the China Sports Fashion Trend Forum, on January 29, offers additional insights into design and production trends. The ISPO AWARD Area will host the best sports products for 2015, especially the Asia Product Award winners. The program culminates today with the renowned Asia Pacific Snow Conference.

This year's focus will be on the 2022 Olympic Winter Games and the planning of ski resorts.

In addition to a number of Asian exhibitors such as Kailas, Mobi Garden and Tread, the exhibition will once again draw many international companies, such as Garmont, LOWA, Mammut, Scarpa and Tecnica. There are many newcomers and repeat exhibitors, as well. Craft, Dynastar, Gore, Oneway, Halti, La Sportiva, Point65, Swix and Thule are among this year's exhibitors who have come to present their products to the Chinese market. ■



MIUZIRS and FM Start Search for New Best Singer

MIUZIRS, China's leading skincare product maker, is teaming up with FM to find the next Voice of China. The two held a press conference on January 18 to announce the start of this year's search.

MIUZIRS invested millions of yuan in this year's *Voice of China* musical journey to 100 cities around the country.

The fierce competition will pick 20 outstanding singers to undergo musical training in Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan and Korea, and then form a team for *The Voice of China* Season 4 challenge in June.

FM is the only music broadcast officially authorized to use the name "The Voice of China." It also has exclusive rights to broadcast of the program.

Through its long-term planning and development, FM has broadened its Voice of China brand and developed a large cultural platform for a win-win model between entertainment and marketing. ■ (By Shu Pengqian)

Slow Food Internazionale Opens China Branch

China Slow Food Association, a branch of Slow Food Internazionale, was founded on January 27 at the Embassy of Italy in China's Cultural Department.

The new association is intended to popularize the Slow Food concept in China, to build a platform for the exchange of Chinese food culture and experience and to organize international food exhibitions.

"No matter in the food system or in our organization, China always plays an essential role considering its abundant types of plants and animals," said Paolo Di Croce, secretary general of Slow Food Internazionale. "[China] even decides whether we can suc-

cessfully fulfill the task – protecting ecological crop diversity – or not."

Zeng Hui, director of the Organizing Committee of Beijing Design Week, said the design week would cooperate with Slow Food Internazionale.

Slow Food Internazionale, established in 1989, is a global and grassroots organization with supporters in 150 countries who link the pleasure of good food with a commitment to their community and environment. It fights against expanding fast food culture, preserves local traditional foods and makes more people realize the importance of choosing the right food. ■

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